

Lisa McPhail

From: Gwen Lohbrunner <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, April 4, 2022 1:10 PM
To: Jordan Watters; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze; Elaine Leonard; Ryan Painter; Ann Whiteaker; Harold Caldwell; Deb Whitten; Trustees
Subject: Proposed cuts to music programs and staff
Categories: Web

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CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

Good afternoon,

I am writing to express my concern regarding proposed cuts to the SD61 budget for music programs and school staff. I am saddened and frustrated to be back in the same place one year later, facing these same issues.

As expressed by many last year, music programs are integral to learning and social development for our children, for the following reasons:

- There is a strong connection between music and math
- Music programs provide play a critical role in developing social connections, particularly for students that do not wish or are not able to participate in intramural athletics programs
- This social connection supports strong mental health, helping reduce risk of isolation, depression and poor self image
- School music programs support inclusiveness and provide opportunities for lower income families whose children may have no other means to access music learnings; they are an important part of overcoming the affordability barrier

Likewise, the proposed cuts to support staff are concerning:

- School counsellors are crucial in supporting mental health of students, to create a positive and productive learning environment; students who are better supported will perform better in school and have a more positive school experience, serving them well later in life
- Custodians play an important role in supporting students' physical health, by keeping classrooms and common areas clean. This has never been more important than during the COVID-19 pandemic, where regular cleaning has been shown to reduce surface transmission of viruses

I implore you to reconsider these proposed cuts to the SD 61 budget. These cuts will have far-reaching negative impacts, and lead to a much-reduced learning experience for our children.

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn Lohbrunner

Lisa McPhail

From: Payton Cosman [REDACTED] >
Sent: Monday, April 4, 2022 1:06 PM
To: Trustees
Subject: Budget Cuts 2022

Categories: Web

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Dear *whomever this may concern*,

I am a student at [REDACTED], and am writing this letter because of the proposed budget cuts for this year.

I have read through the suggested budget cuts, and am frustrated and concerned about the areas you wish to cut and/or lower funds to.

Firstly, the music program is a huge part of many kids' lives, and cutting it would be absolutely detrimental to their well-being. I was in band all throughout Middle School, and participated in Choir, Ukulele lessons and Recorder lessons in my Elementary's Music Programs. Music meant, and still means a lot to me. Not only does it give kids an outlet from their daily stressors and gives them something positive to look forward to outside of class time, but it also helps many students with their mental health, overall well-being, and gives them a chance to make new friends and feel a sense of community.

This brings me to my second concern. The cut in counselling at schools. As it is, schools in our district have very limited resources both inside and outside of the school. With the proposed cut, my school of just under 800 kids will have only one counsellor. As of right now, we are very lucky, and have several counselors, both family and youth, and career counselors. At [REDACTED], it can possibly take several weeks for a counselor to respond back and set up an appointment with a student. Having only one counselor to do all that work is absolutely impossible and shouldn't even be considered doable.

I have personal experience with the long wait times on counseling at my school. My school counselor is the only consistent mental health support I have in my day-to-day life, and she is only available three days a week in the afternoons only. Sometimes I don't see her for two plus weeks, and even when I do see her, I am rushed out of her office within half an hour because she has five plus, sometimes up to ten students, to see before the day ends. She is only there for 3 hours, 3 days a week, and yet she has to fit up to ten kids into her schedule each day... That is completely impossible.

My third concern is that of cutting hours/staff numbers for Educational Assistants. They are a large part of each and every school, and schools would not function properly without them. As someone who benefits from having an EA in the classroom, I know firsthand how rare it is to actually have an EA in class with me. Only two classes that I have taken in the three years here at [REDACTED], have had an EA available. Even then, they worked only part-time. If there are cuts to their already limited hours, the entire school of students and staff will suffer.

Eliminating/limiting access to these resources, will be detrimental to the wellbeing of not only students, but the adults that these cuts affect such as counselors, ea's and others.

Please include this letter in the April 4th meeting pack up.

Thank you,

Jadyn Cosman

Lisa McPhail

From: Shona Lindsay [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, April 4, 2022 12:53 PM
To: Jordan Watters; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze; Elaine Leonard; Ryan Painter; Ann Whiteaker; Trustees
Subject: SD 61 Proposed Budget Cuts
Categories: Web

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Dear trustees,

My reason for sending this letter is two-fold : I am a parent of two elementary aged children in SD 61 who will be greatly affected by the proposed music cuts, and, I am also a highschool counsellor in SD 61 whose position will be affected by the proposed counselling cuts.

I find it disheartening that parents' have to advocate for their children's access to music for a second year in a row. If this program were cut, it would divide the families of SD 61 according to socioeconomic status. The more affluent families would pay for private lessons for their children, and the children of the families that cannot afford it would never be exposed to strings and other musical instruments. As a public school system this is unacceptable. All teachers are entitled to prep time. It is cost-effective to have strings and other music programs run inside the school day, and schedule these programs so that it covers the classroom teacher's prep time. I know this is already done at my children's elementary school, and should be an option that is explored at other schools to make it financially feasible.

Teaching can often be a thankless job, and the proposed cuts to counselling makes many of us feel not valued by our employer in a profession that is already run ragged. Currently I am slightly over the allowed maximum of 479 students. My job entails timetable building and changes, transliteration, university application support, reference letters, graduation checks and plans, mental health support for students and parent and teacher support. Currently there is so much required of me for mental health support and other face to face interactions, that I spend my day prioritizing and trying to get as much as I can done. At night, once I have put my own children to bed, I spend from 8 pm to 11 pm answering emails and trying to finish all of the other administrative tasks that I have not had time to do during the school day. I, as well as many other counsellors in this district, am on the path to burnout. The district must surely be aware of this, as there are not enough counsellors to fill the positions (there tend to be two positions every year that are not able to be filled). I find it disturbing that instead of supporting school counsellors in the hopes of retention, that the budget cuts suggest eliminating the two positions that haven't been filled recently, and also increasing counsellor caseloads from 479 to 675. Also, my position works closely with Career Centre Coordinators and YFC's. If their positions are eliminated, the work that they used to do, will also fall on school counsellors. This is not manageable and it saddens me especially given that we are coming out of a pandemic and the budget proposals do not value mental health support of our students. Many families do not have counselling support through their extended health (through parents' work), so need to rely on school counsellors, YFC's and the medical system for emotional support. I believe everyone is aware of the doctor shortage in Victoria. Many of our students do not have family doctors. Services such as Saanich Youth Mental Health have a waitlist of typically 6-8 months, so it is school counsellors and YFC's that must provide mental health support until another option becomes available. Once again, this is a cut that will have a greater effect on lower socioeconomic families.

I implore you to look at other options for budget cuts that are not face-to-face services that students receive. Education is about the children, so services that directly affect them should not be taken away.

Sincerely,

Shona Lindsay

Lisa McPhail

From: Maureen Betts [REDACTED] >
Sent: Monday, April 4, 2022 11:03 AM
To: Trustees
Subject: Meeting regarding music/counselling programs

Categories: Web

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Dear Trustees

I was a parent in school district 61 and now have grandchildren in the same district. I am a committed supporter of education, a life long learner and believe in a healthy educational system. The fact that you are considering cutting two vital core programs is alarming. It sounds like a desperate measure which makes me wonder how the board got to that place.

In the last 8 years the school district has sold numerous school properties at very valuable prices. Over that same time our tax base has increased most significantly with an influx of people into Victoria now paying school taxes. Ultimately as a result that increase will be reflected in your school budget.

I could list many facts from years of research indicating the immense value of the music program on academics but I'm sure you're well aware of all that. It's not a frill but a core academic program. Both the programs you're considering cutting contribute fundamentally to rewarding and keeping students in the system, to successfully graduate. This leads me to wonder if you have also considered the inevitable drop in numbers of students graduating should you implement such a short sighted solution. It would invariably disable many children who are currently succeeding in our school district due to the support of those programs.

Finally, I can't help but wonder what is happening with the financial operations of the current Victoria School Board trustees that they are struggling so much to keep basic programs for healthy schools, compared to the other school districts in the surrounding area who continue to provide those programs as essential. I see it as the job you signed up for, to fight hard for the fundamental health of our educational system. I know it's a tough job and appreciate your efforts.

Best of Luck with working to find a better solution for the success of students.

Maureen Betts

Lisa McPhail

From: David Procyshyn <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, April 4, 2022 10:55 AM
To: Jordan Watters; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze; Elaine Leonard; Ryan Painter; Ann Whiteaker; Harold Caldwell; Deb Whitten; Trustees
Subject: Proposed budget cuts
Categories: Web

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Dear School Board Trustees ,

I am a father of two children in SD61 and I am writing to express my concern and distress at the proposed cuts to elementary and middle school music programs, counselling, career coordinators and custodial staff.

I understand and appreciate the challenges in dealing with a budget deficit. Many parents run businesses themselves, so they can understand how difficult it can be. But I am deeply disappointed and frustrated to learn that the school district is reconsidering these cuts given the high level of opposition last year from students, parents, and the broader community.

The impact of these proposed cuts is unfair to students and will have a deeply negative impact on the health of our children. I request that you reconsider this proposal instead of making choices that have such negative consequences for students.

Music and the arts are critical spaces for social and emotional development and should not be considered "nice to have." The music program has been foundational in helping my middle school child through a particularly rough 2 years and it has supported her with a sense of community and belonging. Furthermore, if the district is concerned about equity, providing access to this essential learning needs to be a part of our public school system, as opposed to something only accessible to those who have the financial means.

Finally, it is deeply concerning to me that the District is voting on this budget at a time when critical stakeholders including the GVTA and VCPAC are boycotting board meetings in response to the board's closed-door decision to suspend two trustees in February. This calls the integrity of the Board into question, and such a critical decision should not be made with only seven trustees remaining.

I hope you will reconsider this, postpone such a vote until you can engage with appropriate stakeholders and ultimately vote against the proposed cuts. I look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,

David Procyshyn

Lisa McPhail

From: Andrew Newell <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, April 4, 2022 9:21 AM
To: Trustees
Cc: Jordan Watters; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze; Elaine Leonard; Ryan Painter; Ann Whiteaker; Harold Caldwell; Deb Whitten
Subject: Music program cuts
Categories: Web

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To whom it may concern,

I wish to thank you for all your hard work in caring for our children. I know managing a budget like this is a huge responsibility and that you are doing your best to make decisions that benefit as many people as possible.

My understanding is that you are considering making cuts to the elementary and middle school music programs. I can tell you from experience that our daughter has benefited tremendously from these programs and I hope you will consider allowing them to continue. In Elementary School (Quadra) she was in the choir (and would have taken strings if it had been offered). In Middle School [REDACTED], she has been involved in band, strings, and choir all three years. She loves these classes and it brings such happiness and joy to her life. She explores different music styles at home, has developed a passion for movie scores and loves to try new instruments.

The affect of music on our minds, bodies and souls is powerful and mysterious. If children don't have exposure to this language from an early age, their ability to listen and appreciate will be hampered. They also won't have the chance to make music, which is a source of joy to the player (and listener) as well as a powerful mode of expression and regulator of mental health.

I don't envy your upcoming decision, but I thank you in advance for considering all the facts and striving to make a detached decision that you believe will most benefit our children.

Again, thank you.

Kind regards

Andrew Newell
Parent of an 8th grader

Lisa McPhail

From: Sean Lampard-Quicke [REDACTED] >
Sent: Monday, April 4, 2022 8:59 AM
To: Trustees; Jordan Watters; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze; Elaine Leonard; Ryan Painter; Ann Whiteaker; Harold Caldwell; Deb Whitten
Subject: Please protect music programming in schools
Categories: Web

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Dear Trustees and Staff,

I'm asking that during this difficult budget process you choose to protect student programming first, and student support second, while aiming to keep cuts as far from the classroom as possible.

Please maintain music funding at current levels in all middle schools.

Please increase funding to allow for elementary strings opportunities at all elementary schools, and direct your HR department to hire more music teachers so that the current music programs don't go without music TOCs as they have been this school year.

Please protect funding for counsellors at all levels.

I hope it is not lost on you that the largest historical mobilizations of protests and advocacy during the budget processes in this district occurred last year, in protest of music cuts, and in 2000, in protest of music cuts. How discouraging it was that nearly identical cuts to the music programs were brought forward this year after last year. One would have hoped that district staff and trustees had spent the intervening months looking for other options, rather than making the same proposals again. It suggests that those suggesting these cuts are simply banking on less pushback from community (due to fatigue and exasperation) and from the board (after two staunch music supporters were kicked out of office in a situation that I still don't understand as a voter).

Please instead allow yourselves the creativity to question these cuts, encourage each other to hear the will of the community regarding cuts to music, and protect music programming at current levels.

Thank you,
Sean Quicke
Saanich, BC

Lisa McPhail

From: Christina Tsuil-menak [REDACTED] >
Sent: Monday, April 4, 2022 8:16 AM
To: Jordan Watters; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze; Elaine Leonard; Ryan Painter; Ann Whiteaker; Harold Caldwell; Deb Whitten; Trustees
Subject: Proposed cuts 2022
Categories: Web

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Hello,

I am emailing you in support of the invaluable resources for our children and communities: elementary strings, middle school band/strings/choir, school counselors, and custodians.

There is a great need for all of the above. Our children need custodians to help maintain a clean environment and support when needed throughout the day. This will help maintain the students' health as well.

My 11-year-old son states, "Strings makes me happy. I like my teacher and the friends I make. I really like playing 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' on my cello."

The facts are that music is an important part of a growing child's life. As supported by Parental and Nursing Education (ie: Erikson's Theory).

My son has gained great confidence, skills, and social connections since joining strings. The instructor is incredibly supportive and has provided much deserved positive feedback that boosted my son's confidence and drive to continue with his musical endeavors. Our school district has provided this gift for my children that I would not have been able to provide on my own due to financial limitations.

How the school counselor had made a difference to my 11-year-old son,

"[The counselor] has helped me in so many ways. There are lots of kids in my class that need [the counselor]. [The counselor] makes me feel safe, happy, and calm. I do not know why people want to take counselors away."

Both my children continue to benefit from school counselors as they provide vital support. Another example is when my daughter disclosed a teenager in a different high school expressing suicidal thoughts and was self-harming. I was able to reach out to that school's counselor as I did not know the youth's parents or how to communicate with them. The counselor was able to respond promptly and provide immediate support for that youth. Counselors are crucial to anyone's life, especially youth who feel they do not have anyone else to turn to. Literature also supports counsellors as noted in The Maternal Child Nursing Care in Canada (2017, p. 1149).

I thank you for your time and attention to these important matters and for providing space for my children's voices to be heard.

Respectfully,

Lisa McPhail

From: Stacy Barter <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, April 3, 2022 8:25 PM
To: Jordan Watters; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze; Elaine Leonard; Ryan Painter; Ann Whiteaker; Harold Caldwell; Deb Whitten; Trustees
Subject: Proposed budget cuts
Categories: Web

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Dear School Board Trustees ,

I am a parent of two children in SD61 and am writing to express my concern and distress at the proposed cuts to elementary and middle school music programs, counselling, career coordinators and custodial staff .

While I can appreciate the challenges in dealing with a budget deficit, I am deeply disappointed and angered to learn that the school district is reconsidering these cuts given the groundswell of opposition last year from students, parents, and the broader community. I continue to believe the impact of these proposed cuts is unfair to students and will have deep and negative impacts on the health of our children. I implore you to tackle these budget challenges more creatively, seek provincial funding support, and reconsider this proposal, instead looking for opportunities which will not have such negative consequences for students.

I wrote to you last year to share my views that music and the arts are critical spaces for social and emotional development and this essential learning should not be considered simply "nice to have." The music program has been foundational in helping my middle school child through a particularly rough 2 years and it has supported her with a sense of community and belonging. Furthermore, if the district is concerned about equity, you must be aware of how critical providing access to this essential learning is to have as part of our public school system, as opposed to something only accessible to those who have the financial means to pay for it privately.

Finally, it is deeply concerning to me that the District is voting on this budget at a time when critical stakeholders including the GVTA and VCPAC are boycotting board meetings in response to the board's closed-door decision to suspend two trustees in February. This calls the integrity of the Board into question, and such a critical decision should not be made with only seven trustees remaining.

I hope you will reconsider this, postpone such a vote until you can engage with appropriate stakeholders and ultimately vote against the proposed cuts. I look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,
Stacy Barter

Lisa McPhail

From: Rika W [REDACTED] >
Sent: Sunday, April 3, 2022 7:59 PM
To: Jordan Watters; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze; Elaine Leonard; Ryan Painter; Ann Whiteaker; Harold Caldwell; Deb Whitten; Trustees
Subject: please do not cut music programs
Importance: High
Categories: Web

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Hello,

Please keep the music programs – they are very important for youth mental health.

Thank you,

Rika and Brent Weich
[REDACTED]

Lisa McPhail

From: Jennifer Serink [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, April 3, 2022 7:55 PM
To: Trustees
Subject: Cutting band

Categories: Web

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I have 2 girls in middle school band and I am opposed to these programs being cut. I think music is so important to a child's development and self esteem and that everyone should have access to it through our school system. Especially for kids who are into athletics, the music programs allow them to experience the teamwork and camaraderie of playing in a band. It's a lifelong skill that enriches both individuals and the greater community and I strongly oppose the planned cuts. My uncle and grandpa played in bands into their 90s and it's something that keeps minds active and allows for social interactions and stress reduction throughout a person's life. Several times during periods of stress my daughters have picked up their instruments as a way of coping. Please consider keeping these programs running.

Thank you for your time

Sincerely

Jennifer Serink

Lisa McPhail

From: Jackie Gait [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, April 3, 2022 6:52 PM
To: Shelley Green; Kim Morris; Jordan Watters; Diane McNally; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze; Elaine Leonard; Ryan Painter; Rob Paynter; Ann Whiteaker; Deb Whitten; Harold Caldwell; Trustees
Subject: Proposed cuts to music programs
Categories: Web

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Dear Trustees, Kim Morris, Shelley Green, Deb Whitten, and Harold Caldwell,

I am writing with deep concern for the proposed cuts to elementary strings, middle school choir, middle school string and reducing middle school band. My child has benefited immensely from the strings program at [REDACTED] Elementary. He will be devastated if the program is cut next year when he attends [REDACTED] Middle School, as will my younger child who is very excited to start the program at Campus View Elementary next year.

I have witnessed first-hand how the strings program has increased my child's confidence and engagement at school. I believe this is not only because he is learning and mastering a new skill. It is because he is a part of a community. It creates cohesion and excitement about being at school. Isn't that the goal of our education system? To nurture a love of learning?

Not only do these cuts make music a privilege only available to those who can afford it, it also takes away a piece of joy that these children experience at school. Sometimes, this is what motivates a child to get out the door in the morning. Please don't take that away.

Keeping band at a reduced form is not enough. String programs have been part of Victoria schools since 1914, with some elementary schools having up to an 80% enrolment rate. For the majority of these students, this is their only opportunity to learn violin, viola, or cello. Music teachers ensure participation regardless of financial background, lending instruments at no charge for those who cannot afford to rent. In this experiential learning opportunity, they learn the important skills of practice, perseverance, and working communally. Learning a strings instrument at that time in their lives, on the brink of adolescence, instills confidence and community, both vital lessons that make the transition into middle school easier.

Strings in middle schools must also stay in our district, for all the reasons stated for elementary, and because those students need a place to grow musically, to expand their talents and repertoire. And by slashing middle school strings, you will effectively eliminate high school strings.

Choir is integral to a school's spirit and culture, bringing together people across grades, backgrounds, and abilities united by song. The collective power of human voices is one of the oldest forms of making music and through it, we express our humanity. It's almost impossible to imagine a school without a choir. It's

devastating that these are not priorities. Choir, strings, and band are deeply woven in the culture of our schools and beyond. Removing them will be profoundly detrimental to the mental health of our students.

The provincial government has over 3 billion dollars in the current budget set aside for contingency funds. I urge Kim Morris and Shelley Green, with the support of the trustees, to request further funding this year or permission to run a deficit. The mental health of the students and teachers of our district is too valuable, particularly right now when we are all so vulnerable due to the pandemic.

Sincerely,
Jackie Gait

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Jackie Gait.

Victoria BC

Lisa McPhail

From: Bobbi Bartle-Clar <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, April 3, 2022 6:42 PM
To: Trustees
Subject: Opposition to middle school music cuts

Categories: Web

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Dear Trustees of School District 61,

I am incredibly disappointed and dismayed to see middle school music on the District's chopping block again this year.

Trustees are to act as representatives of their community and our community resoundingly responded negatively last year to the proposed cuts. Hundreds of letters were sent, along with weekly protests across the district featuring students, parents, and concerned community members. We have shown an overwhelming support for maintaining music education at current levels.

Trustees are financial stewards and have important responsibilities for oversight of school district financial decisions. Trustees don't have to be certified accountants, but they have to understand budgets, and are required to put the needs of the students first, ask hard questions, and demand better. Why do we have trustees if they are going to indiscriminately support everything from the office of the superintendent? We are not asking you to be antagonistic, but to question, be inquisitive, and to be creative with solutions. Why be a trustee if you are not willing to do so? We feel dismissed and discouraged to have to be fighting this fight for a second year. Budget cuts should come as far away from the students as possible.

2022 is an election year. If the budget is passed with any cuts to music programs or other student services, I will not vote for that person, at any level of government.

Trustees, there are other solutions. We urge you to take your time and do a thorough job. Ask for more money. Look for creative solutions. Talk with, not at, parents and stakeholders. Be leaders. Now, after TWO incredibly difficult pandemic years, is NOT the time to make these cuts, which will negatively impact so many children across our district.

Sincerely,

Bobbi Bartle-Clar

Parent of 4 music students in SD61

Lisa McPhail

From: Paul Hulme [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, April 3, 2022 6:00 PM
To: Jordan Watters; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze; Elaine Leonard; Ryan Painter; Ann Whiteaker; Harold Caldwell; Deb Whitten; Trustees
Subject: Opposed to music program cuts
Categories: Web

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Dear SD 61 Trustees,

My son is a grade 8 student at [REDACTED] and my daughter is in grade 5 at [REDACTED]. Both have participated in the music programs offered by their schools, with my son in Band and Jazz Band and my daughter in Grade 5 strings.

Music has been central to my son's growth and development during his time in middle school. I am deeply saddened that my daughter may not have the chance to have the same experience with the resulting personal growth, sense of purpose and accomplishment, friendships and comradery. Particularly during these covid and post-covid years, the importance to the music program for students' wellbeing cannot be emphasized enough.

Please add my name to those who are firmly opposed to any cuts to the SD 61 music programs, and who strongly support the continued availability of band, strings, and choir.

Sincerely,

Paul Hulme

Lisa McPhail

From: Lee Nicol <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, April 3, 2022 5:55 PM
To: Jordan Watters; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze; Elaine Leonard; Ryan Painter; Ann Whiteaker; Harold Caldwell; Deb Whitten; Trustees
Subject: Proposed cuts to music
Categories: Web

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Dear SD 61 Trustees,

My children are both students in SD 61. My son is finishing up grade 8 at [REDACTED] School, where he participates in Band and Jazz Band. My daughter will be graduating from [REDACTED] in June, where she participates in Grade 5 strings.

I cannot begin to explain just how crucial music has been to my son's growth and development during his time in middle school. I am heartbroken that my daughter may not be able to benefit from the same personal growth, stability, responsibility, sense of purpose and accomplishment, friendships and comradery during her middle school years. Particularly during these covid and post-covid years, the importance to the music program for students' wellbeing cannot be emphasized enough.

Please add my name to the long list of people who are passionate about the music program and are strongly opposed to any cuts.

Sincerely,

Lee Nicol

Lisa McPhail

From: Naomi Muryoi [REDACTED] >
Sent: Sunday, April 3, 2022 11:37 AM
To: Jordan Watters; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze; Elaine Leonard; Ryan Painter; Ann Whiteaker; Harold Caldwell; Deb Whitten; Trustees
Subject: Don't cut the music programs for kids, please.
Attachments: Strings Letter 20210214.pdf
Categories: Web

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March 18, 2022

Dear SD61 Trustees.

We are writing in response to the recent unsettling news that the Greater Victoria School Board is considering removing funding for the Grade 5 Strings Program. As parents of a student that has benefited from this program, we would be remiss if we did not take this opportunity to advocate for the continuation of this program for future students, including our other child, currently in grade 1.

We were fortunate to be able to introduce our son to music at a young age and were excited and grateful that he had the opportunity to learn strings while in elementary school. We understand the limited resources that are available to keep this program operational, and that it is entirely reliant on the skill and dedication of the instructors. However, despite these constraints, the quality of his education, the speed with which he became adept at a novel instrument, and the sense of accomplishment he receives from learning new pieces of music, are all reflections of the commitment the instructors bring to the program.

When he entered middle school, he had the confidence and experience he needed to pursue and achieve his musical goals through continuing with strings and looking for more challenges. He also had the foundation in music theory from elementary school that enabled him to hone his interests and apply them to other instruments. We feel that because of his early introduction to strings he has an appreciation for the challenge of learning an instrument, an understanding of how different genres of music are related, and how music is meditative, contemplative, and instills a sense of accomplishment that has benefits on his mental health.

We feel a decision to remove funding for Grade 5 strings would have detrimental downstream effects on the musical enrichment of students, would put undue pressure on students to choose their musical paths without the earlier foundation introduced in elementary school, and would further limit the non-academic development of public-school students.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Naomi Muryoi



Daniel Ovakim

Lisa McPhail

From: Todd/Wendy Harmer <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, April 2, 2022 6:02 PM
To: Nicole Duncan; Ann Whiteaker; Ryan Painter; Jordan Watters; Tom Ferris; Elaine Leonard; Angie Hentze; Trustees
Subject: PLEASE DO NOT TAKE AWAY AN ESSENTIAL PART OF OUR EDUCATION
Categories: Web

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CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

*PLEASE INCLUDE THIS LETTER IN THE APRIL 4th MEETING PACK UP. Thank you!

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Zoë Harmer and I am in Grade [REDACTED] at [REDACTED], but I went to middle school at Central. I am writing to ask you to reconsider the cuts to music programs that are planned on being made. Music is an essential part of so many students and alumni's education. Music programs bring people together and create a tight-knit community where everyone can have fun and feel supported. In my experience, especially in middle school, I felt that band was the only place I could be myself and take risks to step out of my comfort zone. It was in the music program that I first felt a part of something and that feeling gave me so much confidence to try other things. I don't know where I would be without my middle school music program. It greatly improved my mental health and the mental health of many other students. To take this away from younger students is something that should never happen. For all students, music programs provide a safe place where everyone can learn new things about music, the world and most importantly, themselves.

There is another reason I think music should be saved. For some students, school music programs are the only place where they will ever have the chance to explore playing an instrument. What if a student who would never have the means to take music lessons tries out a band in middle school and discovers their passion? Are you really going to take this away from them? It is not fair to do so because you are eliminating these students' chance to improve their life in this way.

If you take away these music programs, you take away not only the opportunity to learn music, but an important community of people where students feel supported and safe. Please carefully consider my words and every other students' words before the budget is approved. We need our music programs.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Zoë Harmer

Lisa McPhail

From: Henriette Bradford [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, April 2, 2022 9:29 AM
To: Ryan Painter; Nicole Duncan; Tom Ferris; Angie Hentze
Subject: School Budget 2022-2023
Attachments: school budget.pdf

Categories: Web

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I have written a letter to all trustees regarding possible cuts to the School District 61 music programs, Reading Recovery and counsellors, etc. Please see my attachment letter to you all.

Please put this letter in the meeting package for the final reading of the budget on April 7th

Henriette Bradford
Grandmother to a student at Colquitz Middle School

To whom it may concern

Regarding possible budget cuts in School District 61 for 2022-2023 school year.

I am writing to you to express my deep concern regarding possible budget cuts to the Music Programs at our schools, and our Counselling & Reading Recovery programs for the upcoming school year 2022-2023

My granddaughter started Middle School in September 2021 and joined the Grade 6 choir and also participated in a Spring Play. The choir and theatre programs are run by a most excellent teacher who has greatly encouraged a sense of well being and growth to all the students in her program. It was very obvious to anyone who attended the plays and the musical concerts that our children and grandchildren greatly benefited from these programs.

It was a joy to be able to go to a Spring Concert and see all the children singing their hearts out and I would hate this type of program being cut. I would also like to say that attending theatre and being in a play has been of great benefit to my granddaughter as in her Grade 5 class she was too frightened to do any public speaking and now she is comfortable in performing on stage in Grade 6 this year in a play which was written and directed by the choir/theatre/arts teacher, Ms.McKenzie

Children need the Arts in order to flourish and grow as people who cherish the ability to connect with people through song, playing a musical instrument and being involved in theatre. She loved every minute of it and has blossomed as a young person. I believe that both Sophia and her parents and myself would be extremely disappointed if there were any cuts to these programs.

Sophia has also benefited greatly from counselling sessions with the Counsellors at her school, and I cannot imagine how and why a School Board would cut out counsellors. Teachers have many students in their classrooms and the individual help that counsellors provide is priceless. Please, please do not make any cuts in these areas. Instead, try and find the funds in areas as far away from student programs as possible.

Please put my letter in the meeting package for the School Board.

Lisa McPhail

From: Lynn Campbell [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 1, 2022 11:01 PM
To: Angie Hentze; Ann Whiteaker; Elaine Leonard; Jordan Watters; Nicole Duncan; Ryan Painter; Tom Ferris; Trustees
Subject: KEEP MUSIC IN SCHOOLS!
Categories: Web

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CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

To sd61 Trustees,

PLEASE BE SURE TO INCLUDE THIS EMAIL IN THE MEETING PACKAGE

PLEASE KEEP THE FULL SUITE OF MUSIC PROGRAMS IN OUR SCHOOLS!

My grade 6 middle schooler has benefited enormously from the [REDACTED] music programs and has taken full advantage of all there is from band and strings to choir. Her confidence, attitude and happiness have much to do with the music programs, especially with the challenges of navigating a pandemic and entering a new, big school. My high schooler benefits from an amazing music program at [REDACTED] and questions why on Earth would the school district cut the music programs at all. Most of his friends are in at least two music programs. Who would join music in high school if they didn't have it offered in elementary and middle schools?

My kids love music in schools. It's a highlight of their day and the staff are uplifting.

Don't cut any of the programs!

Lynn Campbell

Lisa McPhail

From: Jashan Kaur [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 1, 2022 7:24 PM
To: Community Engagement
Subject: Career Staff

Categories: Green category

CAUTION: External email. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you are confident about the source.

Dear School Board,

I am a grade 12 student from [REDACTED] School (sd61). I want to share how I have benefited from the Career support staff at my school.

Career Centre Coordinator, Stephanie Dawson is passionate about her job. She has always helped me along with other students to acquire the right connections with people. For instance, She was the one who assisted me to find a suitable job for me. I am so thankful to her that I was able to get a job. Through her assistance, I have been able to access the university resources. She has always organized post secondary sessions, in which I gained so much information about the universities. Therefore, it helped me to decide the right university for myself. There have been times where my questions about university and career could not be answered by counsellors. Therefore, counsellors recommend going to Ms Dawson to get accurate information to my questions. I wanted to apply to a University in Foreign country; however, I was unaware about the process and application. She collected all the details and then explained every single step to it. I extremely believe that Career support staff is necessary for students to navigate different career paths. I hope you take this into consideration.

Thank you so much for your understanding,

Jashanpreet Sandhu